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291137Z Aug 00

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	SSO-00	SS-00	USIE-00	EPAE-00	IIP-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6951
INFO NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 004767

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF, AF/S
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR GAYLE SMITH
LONDON FOR CHARLES GURNEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/05
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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CALLS ON NEW ENVIRONMENT MINISTER
FRANCIS NHEMA

REF HARARE 4695

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR TOM MCDONALD, REASON 1.5 (B),
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(D)

SUMMARY

1. (C) SUMMARY: ON AUGUST 24, AMBASSADOR MCDONALD PAID AN INTRODUCTORY VISIT TO NEW MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM FRANCIS NHEMA, WHO IS ONE OF THE YOUNGEST MEMBERS OF THE NEW CABINET. HAVING SPENT MOST OF THE LAST 11 YEARS IN THE U.S. AND CANADA, NHEMA GENERALLY SEES THE U.S.-ZIMBABWE RELATIONSHIP IN A POSITIVE LIGHT. STILL LEARNING THE MINISTERIAL ROPES, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE EFFECTS OF THIS YEAR'S POLITICAL VIOLENCE ON ZIMBABWE'S TOURISM INDUSTRY, BUT HAD ONLY THE GOVERNMENT LINE TO OFFER ON LAND REFORM. ALTHOUGH ASSOCIATED WITH THE YOUNGER GENERATION, NHEMA DOES NOT YET APPEAR TO HAVE THE POLITICAL WHEREWITHAL OR PERSONALITY TO AFFECT ANY REAL CHANGE IN CABINET. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) THE AMBASSADOR, ACCOMPANIED BY POLOFF AND USAIDOFF, PAID AN INTRODUCTORY VISIT TO NEW MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM FRANCIS NHEMA. NHEMA IS ONE OF THE NEW YOUNG BLOODS IN CABINET, AND, AS HE TOLD US, IS THE SECOND-YOUNGEST MEMBER AFTER YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MINISTER BORDER GEZI. THE SOFT-SPOKEN NHEMA INFORMED THE AMBASSADOR THAT THIS IS HIS SECOND POSTING IN THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY, WHERE HE WORKED IN THE 1980S AS A SPECIAL ADVISOR TO THE VENERABLE VICTORIA CHITEPO (WIDOW OF LIBERATION WAR HERO HERBERT CHITEPO), THEN ENVIRONMENT MINISTER.

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U.S.-ZIMBABWE RELATIONSHIP UNCHANGED

3. (C) THE AMBASSADOR BEGAN THE DISCUSSION BY ASKING NHEMA HOW HE ASSESSES THE U.S.-ZIMBABWE RELATIONSHIP. THE MINISTER CONSIDERS IT ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGED UNLESS ONE CONSIDERS THE SUSPENSION OF IMF AND WORLD BANK SUPPORT. HE CHARACTERIZED IT AS BETTER THAN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.K. WHEN ASKED TO EXPLAIN THE INCREASE IN ANTI-AMERICAN RHETORIC, NHEMA BLAMED MEDIA BIAS AND THE BRITISH FOR COMING BETWEEN ZIMBABWE AND THE U.S. ZIMBABWEANS TEND TO LUMP THE U.S. AND U.K. TOGETHER AS "THE WEST," SO WHEN THE BRITISH RELATIONSHIP SUFFERS, THE AMERICAN ONE DOES AS WELL, NHEMA OFFERED. THE AMBASSADOR ENCOURAGED NHEMA AND OTHER OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS THEIR DIFFERENCES WITH THE U.S. PRIVATELY AND NOT IN THE PRESS, TO WHICH NHEMA AGREED.

TOURISM SUFFERS...

14. (C) THE DISCUSSION TURNED TO TOURISM AND THE EFFECT THIS YEAR'S POLITICAL VIOLENCE HAS HAD ON THE INDUSTRY. THE AMBASSADOR STATED THAT DESPITE ZIMBABWE'S MANY PROBLEMS, AMERICAN VISITORS CONTINUE TO COME TO THE COUNTRY. HOWEVER, AMERICANS ARE DIRECTED TO FOLLOW THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S TRAVEL ADVISORY BEFORE PLANNING THEIR TRIP. THE AMBASSADOR SAID A PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE ZIMBABWE TOURISM WOULD NOT BE EFFECTIVE SO
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LONG AS SQUATTERS CONTINUE TO ILLEGALLY OCCUPY FARMS AND INTIMIDATE THEIR OWNERS. THE MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGED, SOMEWHAT GRUDGINGLY, THAT THERE IS LITTLE HE CAN DO TO IMPROVE ZIMBABWEAN TOURISM UNTIL THE LAND ISSUE IS SETTLED. BEFORE THE PROBLEMS DEVELOPED EARLIER THIS YEAR, PROMOTING ZIMBABWE AS A TOURIST DESTINATION FOR AMERICANS WAS AN IMPORTANT UNDERTAKING BY THE EMBASSY.

...WHILE LAND REFORM GRINDS ON

15. (C) PARROTING THE GOVERNMENT LINE, NHEMA REITERATED THAT THE FARM OCCUPIERS WERE TO BE OFF THE FARMS NOT IDENTIFIED FOR COMPULSORY ACQUISITION BY THE END OF SEPTEMBER AND THAT FIVE MILLION HECTARES WERE TO BE REDISTRIBUTED BY DECEMBER. OCCUPIERS ALREADY ON FARMS DESIGNATED FOR REDISTRIBUTION WOULD BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN, HOWEVER. ASKED ABOUT THE EVICTIONS OF THE WEEK OF AUGUST 21 (REFTEL), NHEMA SAID THE POLICE DID NOT FOLLOW GOVERNMENT POLICY AS THOSE EVICTED DID NOT HAVE OTHER LAND ON WHICH TO SETTLE. THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT THE GOZ DOES NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO RESETTLE

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SO MANY PEOPLE IN SUCH A SHORT TIME. UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLES OF THE OWNERSHIP OF PRIVATE PROPERTY AND RULE OF LAW, IN THE U.S. VIEW, IS ESSENTIAL TO RESTORING
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INTERNATIONAL DONOR SUPPORT, AND, THUS, ENSURING
ZIMBABWE'S LAND REFORM PROGRAM IS A SUCCESS.

16. (C) WHEN ASKED WHY THE GOZ SHOULD NOT REDISTRIBUTE LAND GIVEN TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND CRONIES OVER THE YEARS, NHEMA FLATLY DENIED THAT ANY LAND HAD BEEN GIVEN TO GOVERNMENT MINISTERS, BUT DID NOT RULE OUT THAT LOWER-LEVEL OFFICIALS HAD RECEIVED FARMS. MOST PROPERTIES WERE TOO SMALL FOR SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, NHEMA EXPLAINED, AND EVEN IF THEY DID RECEIVE FARMS, THEY WERE STILL LEASED FROM THE GOVERNMENT. IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT PROVIDE INPUTS OR TRAINING TO NEW FARMERS, IS IT NOT SETTING THEM UP FOR FAILURE? SIDESTEPPING THE ISSUE, THE MINISTER RESPONDED THAT FOR THE COMMUNAL FARMER, RESETTLEMENT IS "HEAVEN." ALL HE WANTS IS LAND. WHAT ABOUT THE URBAN POOR WHO ARE MORE INTERESTED IN FINDING JOBS THAN OBTAINING LAND? EVERY ZIMBABWEAN, ESPECIALLY URBAN DWELLERS, DREAM OF RETIRING TO THEIR HOME AREAS TO FARM THEIR NATIVE SOIL, ACCORDING TO NHEMA. MORE AND MORE URBAN ZIMBABWEANS ARE APPLYING FOR COMMUNAL LAND, BUT CANNOT GET IT BECAUSE OF

OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS IN THE COMMUNAL AREAS.

U.S. HELP ON WILDLIFE PROTECTION

17. (U) USAIDOFF BRIEFED THE ENVIRONMENT AND TOURSIM
MINISTER ON TWO PROGRAMS OF MUTUAL INTEREST. THE
CAMPFIRE (COMMUNAL AREAS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR
INDIGENOUS RESOURCES) PROGRAM WAS STARTED IN 1989 TO
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HELP RURAL ZIMBABWEANS CONSERVE THEIR NATURAL RESOURCES
AND ACQUIRE INCOME FROM PROPER GAME MANAGEMENT. THE
PROGRAM IS IN ITS FINAL TWO YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND
MAJOR EFFORTS ARE UNDERWAY TO COMPLETE REMAINING
ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES. THE U.S. HAS PROVIDED \$13
MILLION TO THE WIDELY EMULATED PROGRAM SINCE ITS
INCEPTION, AND WILL BE LOOKING FOR CONTINUED GOZ
SUPPORT. REGARDING CITES (CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL
TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF FAUNA AND FLORA), THE
EMBASSY HAS SUPPORTED ZIMBABWE'S ELEPHANT AND IVORY
POLICY. IN ORDER TO CONTINUE THAT SUPPORT, IT IS
IMPORTANT FOR ZIMBABWE TO CONTINUE TO MANAGE ITS
WILDLIFE AND IVORY STOCKS IN A SUSTAINABLE MANNER.

NOT A PLAYER YET

18. (C) COMMENT: STILL LEARNING THE MINISTERIAL ROPES,
NHEMA STUCK CLOSELY TO THE GOVERNMENT SCRIPT ON LAND
REFORM BUT DID ACCEPT, SOMEWHAT GRUDGINGLY, THAT THE
TOURISM INDUSTRY WOULD CONTINUE TO SUFFER UNTIL THE LAND
ISSUE IS RESOLVED. NHEMA ASKED QUESTIONS AND APPEARED
INTERESTED IN LEARNING THE U.S. POSITION ON A VARIETY OF
ISSUES. WE SUSPECT THAT WITH HIS RELATIVE YOUTH,
WESTERN EDUCATION AND WORKING EXPERIENCE IN THE BANKING
INDUSTRY, NHEMA IS FULLY AWARE OF THE LINKAGES BETWEEN
GOVERNMENT-MOTIVATED POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND ECONOMIC
DECLINE. HOWEVER, HE IS STILL TOO NEW TO THE CURRENT
GOVERNMENT TO GO OUT ON A LIMB. IN ANY CASE, NHEMA DOES
NOT APPEAR TO HAVE THE POLITICAL WHEREWITHAL OR
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PERSONALITY TO AFFECT ANY REAL CHANGE IN CABINET, AND WE
DO NOT EXPECT HIM TO WIELD MUCH INFLUENCE IN THE
ZIMBABWE GOVERNMENT ANY TIME SOON.

19. (U) BIO NOTE: FRANCIS NHEMA IS APPROXIMATELY 45
YEARS OLD AND HAILS FROM THE SHURUGWI DISTRICT OF
MIDLANDS PROVINCE. NHEMA WORKED IN THE ENVIRONMENT
MINISTRY BETWEEN 1985 AND 1989 AS A SPECIAL TOURISM
ADVISOR FOR VICTORIA CHITEPO, WHO WAS ENVIRONMENT
MINISTER AT THE TIME. HE THEN WORKED AS A PUBLICIST IN
THE BANKING AND TOURISM INDUSTRIES IN NEW YORK,
WASHINGTON, AND OTTAWA, CANADA UNTIL ABOUT 1996. NHEMA
RETURNED TO ZIMBABWE TO BECOME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
ZIMBABWE BUILDING SOCIETY (ZBS), THE FIRST INDIGENOUS
FIRM TO PROVIDE MORTGAGES TO LOW-INCOME HOUSING BUYERS.
ALLEGATIONS AROSE IN THE PRESS THAT NHEMA SIPHONED OFF
MILLIONS OF U.S. DOLLARS FROM ZBS FOR HIS PERSONAL USE.
CHARGES OF FRAUD WERE FILED, AND ALL BUT ONE WAS LATER
DROPPED. ONE IS APPARENTLY STILL PENDING. IN 1999, THE
GOVERNMENT BAILED ZBS OUT OF BANKRUPTCY, AND NHEMA LEFT
THE ORGANIZATION. NHEMA RETURNED TO GOVERNMENT IN 2000
AFTER HIS ELECTION TO PARLIAMENT FROM HIS NATIVE
MIDLANDS PROVINCE, AND WAS APPOINTED MINISTER IN JULY.

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NHEMA IS MARRIED TO MATADI NHEMA, A DAUGHTER OF THE LATE
VICE-PRESIDENT JOSHUA NKOMO, AND IS A MEMBER OF ZANU-PF.

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